

6/29/2009 This Week in Congress

This Week in Congress

June 29, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Voting Against Cap and Trade

A last minute push by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and President Barack Obama to convince skeptical lawmakers to vote in favor of the Waxman-Markey legislation resulted in the bill passing the House of Representatives Friday evening by a vote of 219 to 212. I voted against this legislation that will cause a significant increase in the price of utility bills, transportation, agriculture production and most everyday products. The tax will affect every working family and every small business in America. If you use electricity or gas, you will be affected by this bill. Reports estimate the cost of cap and tax legislation on each household is an additional \$2,979 per year.

In the midst of this economic slump, American families simply cannot afford an increase in cost for basic necessities. The legislation now awaits action in the Senate. [Click here to read more about this bill.](#) [Click here to view my remarks to the House of Representatives during debate of the cap and tax legislation.](#)

Military Construction and Personnel Benefits Approved by House

On Thursday, I supported approval in the House of Representatives of the annual policy and funding blueprint for the Department of Defense. The 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 2647, authorizes funding for military projects and facilities across the country and specifically included more than \$162 million for military construction projects at Fort Riley. The bill also enhances benefits for military personnel, families and veterans. Passage of this authorization legislation is the first step in making sure these projects are funded. The legislation now awaits action in the Senate.

The legislation approves six Fort Riley construction projects, including: the Battalion Complex, the Brigade Complex, an Advanced Waste Water Treatment Plant, Igloo Storage, a Land Vehicle Fueling Facility and the Training Aids Center.

This legislation also authorizes benefits for military personnel, families and retirees, including a pay raise of 3.4% for service members. The legislation extends TRICARE eligibility to reserve members so they can receive full TRICARE coverage 180 days before they go on active duty and provides all disabled military retirees with less than 20 years service their full military retirement pay and veterans' disability compensation, without offset, for one year. In addition, the legislation authorizes \$50 million for Impact Aid funding to assist local education agencies providing support to military children, with an additional \$15 million for those heavily impacted by force structure changes and BRAC. Finally, the legislation establishes an internship pilot program for military spouses to obtain employment with federal agencies in order to provide them with opportunities in careers that are portable as they move from station to station.

Honoring Our Country's World War II Veterans

On Tuesday, I was honored to welcome a large group of Kansas World War II veterans to Washington, D.C. The group was flown to Washington, D.C., as part of the Honor Flight program to see the WWII Memorial on the National Mall. The opportunity for the veterans to take the trip came from local volunteers and donors acting through the program, which is a grassroots, nonprofit organization that helped raise funds for the trip. The trip was organized by Dan Curtis of Great Bend and included family members and "guardians" who accompanied the veterans.

[Click here to view photos](#) and [click here to learn more about Honor Flight from their Web site](#).

Disaster Declaration Granted for Kansas

This week, a major disaster declaration for Kansas was issued to help communities recover from the severe winter storms and near-record snow that occurred March 26-29, 2009. Last month, I, along with Members of the Kansas delegation, supported a request for a disaster declaration that was sent to President Obama as a result of the March 2009 winter storms that hit southwest, northwest and south-central Kansas. The Governor's request for federal Public Assistance for 14 counties, snow removal assistance for 19 counties and Hazard Mitigation for the entire state was granted. [Click here to view a list a counties that will receive assistance under the disaster declaration](#).

Proposed Rule Change Could Criminalize Boy Scouts and Farmers

This week, I joined 70 Members of the House of Representatives in asking U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to halt a regulation she proposed that would expand the 50-year-old definition of "switchblades" to include pocket knives that are commonly used for work and recreation.

I am opposed to Secretary Napolitano's proposed regulation because it defies common sense to prevent Americans from having a pocket knife. The action could ban a tool routinely used by law enforcement, Boy Scouts, construction workers, farmers and hunters.

Transportation Subcommittee Meets on Highway Funding

On Wednesday, I attended a Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways markup of the Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009. This legislation will help fund highway construction and public transit for the next five years. While I am a strong advocate for transportation infrastructure, I have some concerns over the specifics of this bill. I will work to improve this legislation to help America improve its transportation infrastructure.

Speaking to Lawrence Rotary Club Members

En route to Washington, D.C., I spoke at the Lawrence Rotary Club on Monday. I visited with members about legislation I recently introduced that requires the federal government to get rid of its ownership stake in private companies within the next year. I also discussed my opposition to government-run health care and the placement of Guantanamo Bay

prisoners at Fort Leavenworth. As a fellow Rotarian, I always enjoy meeting with other Rotary members in Kansas. Thanks to Club President Ted Haggart for inviting me to speak and Gail Agrawal, Dean of the KU School of Law, for her kind introduction. [Click here to view a photo.](#)

Meeting with Former KBI Director Larry Welch

While in Lawrence on Monday, I also met with the former Director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI), Larry Welch. While retired, Director Welch continues to provide a wealth of knowledge on the process of keeping Kansans safe. Our discussion consisted of initiatives our state could undertake with the help of possible federal funding. Having completed a Congressional Fellowship with me last year, Director Welch has been working to create procedures to reduce and eliminate the flow of foreign drugs into the United States. It is a worthy cause and something that affects every American. Thanks to Director Welch for his efforts to educate me.

Tonganoxie Community Visit

Later on Monday, I had the pleasure of meeting with Tonganoxie residents at Bichelmeyer's Steakhouse for tea and coffee. This was a great opportunity to get acquainted with local residents and to learn about the many good things going on in the community. Thanks to Terry Needham and J.W. Evans for arranging such an enjoyable visit.

Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth

Also on Monday, I toured the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth and discussed with military leaders the potential relocation of terrorists from Guantanamo Bay detention facility to Kansas. What I observed during my visit only confirms my prior belief that Fort Leavenworth is the wrong place to house Guantanamo's detainees.

The U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth is a state-of-the-art facility designed to house hundreds of inmates at all levels from minimum to maximum security. Should the terrorists be relocated to Fort Leavenworth from Guantanamo, the approximately 450 current inmates would have to be relocated elsewhere. As a result, Fort Leavenworth would be forced to operate far under capacity, wasting both money and resources.

Furthermore, within just 100 meters of the maximum security barracks lays private property, including farmland that has been with Kansas families for generations. If terrorists are relocated to Fort Leavenworth, the government will be obligated to invoke eminent domain over the property to create a sufficient buffer zone, and at a price of well over \$200 million.

To block the transfer of terrorists to Kansas, I have sponsored legislation, introduced by Kansas Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, to prevent these terrorists from being relocated to Fort Leavenworth. [Click here to view photos from my tour.](#)

Dedication of Harland E. Priddle Industrial Drive in Haven

On Saturday, I was in Haven for the dedication of the Harland E. Priddle Industrial Drive, where I joined family, friends and admirers in recognizing Harland Priddle. In a lifetime of distinguished public service, Harland has held many

important titles: colonel in the United States Air Force, successful businessman, Kansas Secretary of Agriculture, Kansas Secretary of Commerce and Executive Director of the K-96 Development Association-to name just a few. In these and many other positions, Harland has brought honor to his nation, state and community. Despite these impressive accomplishments, I know that Harland most cherishes the titles of husband, father, grandfather and friend. And like so many others, I value Harland's friendship and appreciate his counsel.

In a world where we continually hear about the need for young people to have role models and heroes, we need look no further than Harland to find the kind of example we are seeking. The dedication of Harland E. Priddle Industrial Drive is a fitting way to honor the life of an exceptional public servant for generations to come.

I was glad to see the City of Haven and the Haven Chamber of Commerce recognize Harland in this way. Congratulations to Harland on this well-deserved honor. I wish him and his wife, Winifred, many more happy years together. [Click here to view a photo from the event.](#)

Annual Listening Tour Continues

This coming week, I will continue my Annual Listening Tour with stops in the following counties:

Wednesday, July 1

Wallace County Tour Stop, Sharon Springs

Time: 8:30 to 9:30 AM CST (7:30 - 8:30 AM MST)

Location: Stephen's Restaurant

Address: Highway 27 and 40th

Logan County Tour Stop, Winona

Time: 10:00 to 11:00 AM

Location: Winona Firehouse

Address: 204 Bellview

Friday, July 3

Wabaunsee County Tour Stop, Harveyville

Time: 10:30 to 11:30 AM

Location: Harveyville City Hall

Address: 274 West Oak Street

Saturday, July 25

Ellsworth County Tour Stop, Wilson

Time: 8:30 to 9:30 AM

Location: Senior Center

Address: 511 25th Street

Residents are invited to attend the town halls to share their thoughts with me on current issues. [Click here to view the listening tour schedule and see where I have already stopped this year.](#)

In the Office

Spratt of Lawrence were in with the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation to visit about employment and training opportunities for disabled Kansans. Candace Anderson Dixon of Hutchinson was in with the Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Center to discuss funding for crime victim programs that help Kansans. Anne Collingwood of Beloit was in to tell me about her experience as the Kansas winner of the National Peace Essay Contest, sponsored by the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Judi O'Grady of Eudora and Kara Cunningham of Baldwin City were in with CureSearch to raise awareness of pediatric cancer. Sheila Koop of Ulysses was in with the Ulysses Career Learning Academy to share her support for federal charter school programs. Andrea Adkins of Leavenworth was in with the City of Leavenworth to tell me about economic development initiatives. Mark Schreiber of Topeka was in with Westar Energy to discuss climate change legislation.

Don Black of Shawnee Mission was in with the Child Health Corporation of America to talk about children's hospitals issues. Judy Billings of Lawrence was in with Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area to share the heritage area's management plan with me. Dr. Wes Garton of Wichita; Dr. Steven Bryant of Concordia; Dr. Ashley Scantling of Emporia; Dr. Whitney Coleman of Valley Falls; Dr. Mike Malone, Todd Fleischer and Gary Robbins of Topeka; and Mike Atteberry were in with the Kansas Optometric Society to discuss health care reform and federal legislation regarding eye care services.

Thomas Van Wart of Hillsboro, Ali Bahr of Lawrence and Amy Karr of Emporia were in with Resolve Uganda to advocate for legislation that seeks to bring the 23-year conflict to an end. I became a sponsor of H.R. 2478, the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act this week at their request. Pat Morse of Dodge City was in with FairPoint Communications to discuss national Broadband policy with regards to distribution of stimulus funds and reform of the Universal Service Fund. A group of 35 students and chaperones involved with 4-H came by my office to visit and for a photograph on the Capitol steps.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Rita Foster of Wichita, Davin and Caryl Knolton of Leavenworth, Suzanne and Lela Larson of Riley and a group of students from Frankfort High School. In from Hays were Dave, Annette and Brooks Barber; Craig and Paula Manteuffel; and Lisa Colwell. Also in for a tour were Carl, Marilyn and Linden Stueve of Olpe; Lance, Julie and Katie Wolters and Jan Fiorelli of Osborne; Kent and Marilea Rittenhouse of Hanston; Gregg and Janell Curry and Max and Julie Buster of Madison; and Doug, Jane, Abigail, Callen, Emma and Kennedy Ayre of Pawnee Rock. In from McPherson were Darrel, Sarah, Alexander, Jocelyn, Hailey and Grace Colaw; and Trenton, Tammy and Taylor Goering.

Very truly yours,

Jerry